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ABSTRACT

Intergenerational child care is a general label for the concept of interactions between young children in prekindergarten and child care programs and older adults who are retired or nearing retirement. Discussion of the concept and associated trends in care initially focuses on factors accounting for the recent interest in involving older adults in programs for young children. Types of intergenerational programs such as exchange, volunteer/aide, and employee programs are described. Objectives of intergenerational programs and benefits of intergenerational experiences for children and older adults are listed. Subsequent discussion focuses on administrative considerations for intergenerational exchange programs, volunteer programs, and employee programs. Included in the latter section are discussions of trends regarding older volunteers and employees, age stereotyping, the inaccuracy of job-related age stereotypes, facts countering age bias, and common misconceptions about the economic condition of older adults, their involvement in society, and their attitudes about work and retirement. Concluding sections of the document concern training and staff development needs of older adults, related issues, and steps that will provide needed information about such programs and their effects. (RH)

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INTERGENERATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAMS: BENEFITS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, OLDER ADULTS AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

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Intergenerational child care is a general label for the concept of interactions between young children in prekindergarten and child care programs, and older adults who are nearing retirement or who have retired. Intergenerational child care is a trend receiving increasing attention from both early childhood educators and gerontologists. Recent interest in involving older adults in programs for young children can be attributed to many factors.

There has been a steady increase in the demand for child care services, particularly for infant and toddler programs. For the first time in our country's history, more than 50% of all mothers of preschool age children are working outside the home. During the past decade the incidence of single-parent families with the parent working outside the home has also increased. As a result of these employment trends, child care placements have not been able to keep pace with the demand for services.

A second factor involves the lack of opportunities for meaningful employment and social experiences which meet the particular needs of the older adult. Our nation's elderly are now experiencing major changes. Increased longevity has made older adults the fastest growing age group in our nation. America's youth oriented society is affecting older adults who

are finding themselves increasingly segregated from the mainstream of society. Discrimination against older adults has become more problematic as older employees attempt to remain in their jobs or to enter the job market. Bias against the hiring or retaining of older workers is well recognized.

Finally, proponents of many intergenerational child care programs point to the lack of opportunities for meaningful interaction between families with young children and older adults. The number of extended family households has decreased sharply during the past generation. Increased mobility has resulted in less frequent interactions between grandchildren and grand parents.

Types of Intergenerational Programs

In response to these and other factors, difference types of intergenerational programs have evolved to meet the needs of young children and older adults. While overlap is often observed among goals of activities and programs, three types of intergenerational child care programs and activities are apparent: (a) exchange programs, (b) volunteer/aide programs, and (c) salaried employee programs.

Exchange programs. Exchange programs are characterized by direct, face-to-face interactions between young children and older adults. Exchange visits usually last about an hour or two. In some exchange programs visits may occur on a regular basis, though intervals between visits are most often 2-4 weeks or more.

In other exchange programs visits are irregular, and may occur only once or twice a year. In the most common pattern of exchange programs, young children are transported from their center to the nursing/group home. Older adults generally are not transported to the prekindergarten site for an exchange visit. Exchange programs are usually initiated between pre-kindergarten and nursing/group home personnel, rather than directly with the older adults who will be involved in the program. Decisions about whether or not to participate in such programs may be made for older adults by nursing/group home administrators. Intergenerational exchange programs and activities can be described in terms of one or more of the following patterns.

1. Children from prekindergarten programs are taken to group homes for the elderly for one-time or irregularly scheduled occasional visits (Patch, 1983). These visits may be scheduled around holidays, and activities are planned to promote interaction among children and the residents of the facility visited.

2. Children from prekindergarten programs are taken to nursing or group homes for the elderly on a regular basis (Liebman, 1984; Mitchell & Schachel, 1979; McDuffie, 1979; Nash, 1983). This is the most common form of intergenerational exchange programs. In some programs of this type (e.g., Liebman, 1984), an effort is made to match specific children with certain older adults in order to facilitate communication and personal

interaction over a longer period of time. As in the one-time/occasional programs described above, activities appropriate to both the young child and the older adult are planned to foster positive interaction.

3. Older adults from a nursing home, retirement home or other facility travel to the prekindergarten program site for a one-time, irregularly scheduled or occasional visit. There are relatively few examples of this type of intergenerational interaction activity, though Liebman (1984) describes this activity as one part of their program. One possible reason that this type of exchange is not more common is that the older adult may not prefer traveling to a child care or preschool facility (Robberts, 1981).

4. Older adults from a nursing home or other facility serving older adults travel to the prekindergarten program site on a regular though infrequent basis (Mitchell & Schachel, 1979).

Volunteer/aide programs. A second category of intergenerational programs is characterized by the involvement of individuals or small groups of older adults as volunteers or as unpaid teacher aides working at the prekindergarten site (Kershner, 1977; McDuffie, 1979). In contrast to intergenerational exchange programs, contact between older adults and young children is not necessarily arranged between program personnel at the nursing/group home and those at the prekindergarten program. While arrangements for volunteer or aide

activities may be made through church, community, or social service organizations; older adults may volunteer their services directly to a prekindergarten program. Conversely, prekindergarten personnel may make arrangements directly with an older adult to serve as an aide or a volunteer. Also in contrast to exchange programs, the older adults almost always travel to the prekindergarten program site to perform their activities with young children. Similarly, recall that exchange program activities always require interaction between a young child and an older adult. However, in volunteer/aide programs the older adult may provide services which do not directly involve children. Older adults may volunteer their services as secretaries, bookkeepers, cooks, janitors or maintenance. Most frequently they work directly with children in a variety of ways.

Two distinct patterns of intergenerational volunteer/aide programs are apparent.

1. Older adults volunteer their specific skills or general service to prekindergarten or child care programs on a one-time, irregular or infrequent basis. For example, a teacher who is leading a unit on Bread Around the World may invite the grandmother of a Hispanic child in her room to spend a morning with the children explaining, demonstrating and helping them make tortillas. In another instance, a retired carpenter who is a neighbor of one of the staff members may come in two or three times during the year to repair furniture and mend toys and equipment.

2. Older adults serve as volunteer program staff or teacher aides on a frequent and regular basis. In this pattern of involvement older adults may volunteer their services as indirect service providers. A retired accountant may volunteer her services as a bookkeeper for the program. A retired secretary may agree to spend two half-days each week handling typing and correspondence. Many older adults prefer to volunteer to work directly with children as teacher aides and may do so several hours a day, everyday of the week.

Employee programs. A third category of intergenerational child care programs is characterized by the part or full-time employment of older adults as indirect or direct service providers for children. In this pattern, older adults are salaried employees of the prekindergarten program. The older adult employee is screened, interviewed, hired, assigned, supervised, and evaluated as are other employees in the early childhood program: that is, with consideration for the demands of the specific position and in relation to the abilities, knowledge and attitudes of the employee. While in most instances older adults are employed along with workers of all ages, there are programs which employ only older adults as staff.

Intergenerational employee child care programs follow organizational patterns of most prekindergarten and child care programs and two patterns are apparent.

1. Older adults serve as salaried, part or full time aides or assist teachers in a prekindergarten or child care program. (Cohen, et al., 1981; Ginnane, 1981).

2. Older adults are employed on a half-day or full-day basis as head teachers having full responsibility for a group of children (Gramma's, n.d.).

Objectives of Intergenerational Programs

Collectively these programs are intended to satisfy a variety of objectives (Cohen, et. al., 1981; Lally & Grossman, 1981; Liebman, 1984; McDuffie, et. al., 1983).

1. Promote understanding among generations

2. Provide education about the process of aging

3. Interrupt the process by which young children develop negative perceptions of aging

4. Provide situations which lead to positive experiences for older adults with young children

5. Through effective models, inform society about the value of intergenerational interactions

6. Expand employment and work opportunities for the elderly

7. Provide opportunities for older adults to develop an integral function in the community

8. Provide opportunities to build self-esteem and self-reliance

9. Provide opportunities for meaningful interaction among a wide variety of age groups

Benefits of Intergenerational Experiences for Children and Older Adults

A wide range of benefits are claimed for young children and for older adults who participate in intergenerational experiences and programs (Lally & Grossman, 1981; Liebman, 1984; McDuffie, et. al., 1983; Robberts, 1981). It must be recognized at the outset, however, that almost without exception these claims are subjective. Based primarily on personal experience and observations of program personnel, these claims fail to meeting generally accepted standards for valid and reliable knowledge. We currently lack the evidence necessary to determine if some, all or none of these claims are true. Given this caveat, listed below are first, benefits of intergenerational experiences claimed for children; and next, benefits claimed for older adults participating in these experiences.

Benefits for children

1. Young children's attitudes about older adults become more positive.

2. Problematic behavior improves as a result of the one-to-one contact with an older adult. For example, a shy child becomes more outgoing.

3. Children are provided an opportunity to develop a caring relationship with others.

4. Children learn to love and respect a new group of friends who are quite different in age.

5. Interactions among a young child and an older adult during an exchange experience may provide that child's teacher with increased insight about that child.

6. Children engage more frequently in dramatic play episodes involving older adult characters.

7. Young children have an opportunity to encounter the values and attitudes of another generation.

8. Young children have opportunities to build human relationships with members of another generation.

9. Opportunity for daily or frequent contact with older adults in both play and routine settings.

Benefits for older adults.

1. As a result of intergenerational activities some older adults appeared generally more enthusiastic about life.

2. Improvement and change in level of concern about personal appearance.

3. An increased level of activity outside the group home setting.

4. Nursing home staff will develop a better level of understanding about the older adult as a result of observing interactions between that adult and a young child.

5. Older adults will gain increased feelings of contributing to society and the lives of others.

6. Expansion of opportunities for meaningful activities after retirement.

7. Expansion of job opportunities.

8. Opportunity to contribute to the integral function of the community after retirement.

9. Increased opportunity to interact with a variety of age groups in society.

10. Increased opportunity to build self-esteem and self-reliance.

11. Increased levels of physical and mental activity.

12. Improved strength, flexibility, and mental alertness.

13. Generally improved health.

Inspection of these lists reveals that little is known about the possible effects on both young children and older adults who participate in intergenerational experiences and programs. This is clearly an area where much careful description and further study is necessary. There is no doubt that intergenerational experiences provide opportunities for a variety of outcomes, intended and unintended, positive and negative. Responsible development of future programs demands better knowledge of these effects.

Administrative Considerations for Intergenerational Exchange Programs

There are important considerations for early childhood educators responsible for the administration and management of intergenerational programs featuring exchange visits between young children and older adults in institutional settings. Administrative considerations for exchange programs are different in many respects from considerations for administrators of either volunteer/aide or salaried employee intergenerational programs.

These differences are due primarily to the nature of the experiences provided, the usual setting for these experiences, and the characteristics of preschool age children and institutionalized older adults.

Those responsible for planning intergenerational exchange programs and selecting goals or purposes of such programs should recognize, for example, that most older adults (95%) do not live in nursing or group retirement homes; that most older adults (over 80%) are not confined to wheelchairs and do not use canes or walkers; and that most older adults do not have visual impairments (86%) or hearing impairments (72%) (Fowles, 1984). In other words, only 5% of all adults over the age of 65 live in institutions--primarily nursing homes.

Only 2% of older adults in the 65-74 age bracket live in institutions, with the percentage increasing to 7% and 23% for persons in the 75-84 and over 85 brackets respectively. One of the characteristics of many residents of nursing homes is the need for functional assistance with personal care activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, using the toilet, getting in or out of bed or chair; or with home management activities such as walking, going outside, preparing meals, shopping or routine chores.

Considerations regarding older adults. The implications of these facts are important to those who plan and manage experiences where young children visit older adults in institutional settings. If program goals call for young

children to develop positive attitudes about the process of aging, or to develop accurate, representative perceptions of older adults, or to dispel common stereotypes about older adults, then the following are important considerations in exchange programs.

1. What is the physical appearance and degree of alertness of the older adults young children will see and with whom they will interact? Will one of the unintended outcomes of the exchange experience be the reinforcement of stereotypes that older adults are senile, doddering individuals confined to walkers or wheelchairs?

2. What is the physical appearance of the institutional setting in which the exchange visits will occur? Where will the activities take place? What will young children see while they are at the nursing home?

3. Not all adults have attitudes appropriate for interaction with young children. Are older adults with whom children will interact patient and accepting? Are older adults aware of and prepared to respond appropriately to the direct questions that young children might ask them about their physical appearance? Are activities selected which are appropriate to the abilities and interests of older adults as well as the young children with whom they will interact?

4. Do the older adults involved in the exchange have a clear understanding of the purpose of the activities? Has adequate preparation with older adults taken place? Is appro-

priate support provided for older adult participants to insure that they will be successful?

5. In programs of regular and frequent participation which last over a long period of time, what arrangements have been made to handle the effects on older adults of separation with the child with whom they have been paired? How will discontinuation of a program over the summer months affect an older adult for whom participation represents an important part of their life?

6. In exchange programs where older adults travel to the prekindergarten site, has consideration been given to architectural features such as stairs, which may present potential barriers to older adults in wheelchairs or using walkers?

Considerations regarding children. The developmental characteristics of young children, their family/social history and their attitudes suggest important considerations for managers of intergenerational exchange programs.

1. Preschool age children are developing self-control abilities. Poor self-control abilities may make it difficult to take some young children on trips from the center to a nursing home.

2. Planners should be cognizant that family history may make visits to a nursing home difficult for some children. A recent death of an aged relative, close contact with seriously

ill older adults or adults with degenerative mental or physical problems may require special consideration for staff planning exchange visits to a nursing home.

3. Similarly, some young children may have had negative experiences or have negative associations regarding nursing homes or hospitals. Careful preparation and discussion with young children can reveal children's perceptions of nursing/ group homes or hospitals.

4. Those planning intergenerational exchange visits must have a clear understanding of children's perceptions and stereotypes of older adults. Jantz and Seefeldt (1976) studied children's attitudes toward the elderly and found a clear association of old age with negative physical attributes and intellectual decline. Characteristics such as dirty, crippled, sick, ugly and sad were most often attributed to older people by children.

5. Careful preparation and advance organization with children is essential for the success of intergenerational exchange programs. Before children make an exchange visit they should be helped to understand what they will see. Recent books and pictures about older adults can be used to initiate and support discussions with children. In one excellent program (Liebman, 1984) prekindergarten staff went to the nursing home and took photographs which were then used with children in preparation for their initial visit.

6. Some young children may need to be prepared to understand and accept the limitations of older adults with whom they will interact. This assumes both a general and specific understanding of the characteristics of older adults, and knowledge of the specific older adults who will be participating in the programs.

7. Administrators must also recognize and prepare for the potential for serious illness or death of older adults who are participating in the exchange program. Advance planning and thoughtful preparation can turn such an occurrence into a positive learning experience for young children.

8. Attention must also be given to children regarding separation from older adults resulting from summer discontinuation of a regular and frequent exchange program.

Administrative Considerations for Volunteer and Employee Programs

Older adults represent a valuable source for volunteers, aides and salaried employees in prekindergarten and child care programs. Fair and supportive treatment of older employees and volunteers should be an important goal of administrators of prekindergarten programs at any time, but it is particularly important at the present time. Program directors need to have an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and unique needs of older employees and volunteers. Administrators must examine their own perceptions and knowledge about the capabilities

and appropriate roles of older employees and volunteers. Program directors must also be aware of and knowledgeable about recent legal requirements that apply to older employees.

Trends regarding older volunteers and employees. There are several trends in our society which support the need for early childhood program directors to consider older volunteers and employees. Inflation, the women's movement and changes in family patterns have contributed to a sharp increase in the demand for child care services. Cohen, et al. (1981) estimates that by 1990 75% of women with preschool children will enter the work force.

At the same time that demand for child care services is increasing, many early childhood program directors are reporting difficulty in obtaining staff. This is no doubt due, in part, to the traditionally low wage paid to child care workers, and the failure of that wage to keep pace with inflation and the increasing cost of living. Recent scandals of child abuse in some child care programs has reinforced the public's already low opinion of child care programs and those who work as child care providers. As the early chilhood profession matures, increase in licensing standards and standards for child care staff have reduced the attractiveness of child care work for many marginally qualified staff.

Further evidence is available from demographic trends regarding older Americans. The older population--persons 65 years or older--number 27.4 million in 1983, or about 12 percent of the U.S. population. The number of older Americans increased

by 6 percent since 1980, compared to an increase of only 3 percent for the under 65 population. The older population is expected to continue to grow in the future, with the over 65 population reading about 21 percent of the population in America by 2030. These figures take on additional importance in light of the effects of economic pressures to delay retirement, or in the case of those already retired, to augment their real income. Employees with limited education and skills--many of which are women--have a great need to continue working for financial reasons. This group of older adults is particularly related to child care programs.

The trend toward increased legal protection for older workers is an important reality facing early childhood administrators. While in the past attention has been primarily on race and sex discrimination, the focus in the future will shift to age discrimination. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act as amended in 1978 provides specific protection against discrimination in employment decisions for employees and job applicants between the ages of 40 and 70. The effect of this act is to require administrators to make job assignment, promotions, pay raises, training opportunities and all other personnel decisions without regard to the employee's age.

Toward an understanding of age stereotyping. Stereotyping is making judgments about others on the basis of their membership in a particular group. Age stereotyping involves making judgments about people based on how old they are (Rosen and

Jerdee, 1985). If an early childhood program director makes decisions based on the age of an employee, they run the risk of making faulty judgments about individual differences in skills, knowledge and attitudes. Such decisions can be harmful to children, the program and to the self-esteem of the employee.

There are many cliches used to describe older employees in prekindergarten and child care programs: went into retirement but kept the job, you can't teach an old dog new tricks, marking time, fading fast and slightly senile. While these are negative cliches we often hear, there are also positive examples: never too old to learn, the wisdom of age, not older just better, and has everything at her fingertips.

Stereotypes such as these are learned and used to organize our interactions with the world. The content of stereotypes is affected by the culture in which we were raised and live, economic factors, social factors, pressures from our families and friends. Stereotypes may be learned from inaccurate images presented in schools, textbooks and from movies and television. Stereotypes are also learned from our own experiences with individuals representing the groups to which stereotypes are assigned.

Accuracy of job-related age stereotypes. The whole notion of age stereotyping suggests that all older persons share the same characteristics. Since this is not true, of course, judgments or actions based on age stereotypes may result false impressions, poor judgments and inappropriate assignments (Rosen

& Jerdee, 1985). Rosen and Jerdee (1985) summarize evidence reported in Doering, Rhodes and Schuster's (1983) comprehensive review of the scientific literature on the characteristics of older workers.

> What emerges from this review is a picture of older Americans as a heterogeneous group, including many individuals who show commitment, loyalty, dedication, and good health; and others whose continued organizational contribution depend on job redesign or job transfer to reduce physical and stress demands, special precautions to reduce accident risks, and training and development to overcome obsolescence. (p. 22)

Listed below are facts regarding the accuracy of job-related age stereotypes.

Moral, commitment and involvement.

1. Older workers have higher morale and a greater sense of organizational commitment and job involvement than workers in any other age group.

2. Older workers tend to rate work as more important to their lives than did other age groups.

3. Worker over age 65 have the highest job satisfaction of any age group.

4. Older workers generally report a greater sense of commitment to the organization.

5. Older workers are much less likely than younger workers to report an intention to leave a job or to actually leave a job. This finding has particular implications for child care programs which are plagued by frequent turnover and the problems this causes for children and administrators.

Performance on the job.

1. There is little support for the common belief of significant drops in performance associated with aging.

2. Of particular interest to early childhood administrators are studies which indicate that among groups of paraprofessionals, older workers actually outperformed younger workers.

3. In direct opposition to another common stereotype, rigid, dogmatic behavior is unrelated to age.

4. Chronological age is an inadequate basis for predicting vocational performance.

Health and well-being.

1. The net effect of changes in physical condition of bones and muscles due to aging is some loss in strength.

2. The immunity system is more likely to fail as the body ages.

3. Sensory losses are modest and correctable, and do not impair job requirements.

4. Only about 8 percent of the population over 65 show indication of significant mental deterioration such as partial memory loss and slowing of reaction time.

Absenteeism. Rosen and Jerdee (1985) cite an important distinction between avoidable and unavoidable absences. When an employee takes a couple of days off for personal reasons (either reported or unreported) these are called avoidable absences. When an employee is allowed time off for reasons such as illness, these are called unavoidable absences.

1. Older workers have a much better attendance record with respect to avoidable absences.

2. When unavoidable absences occur, older employees lose more time than their younger counterparts.

3. The accident records of older workers appear to be better than those of younger workers.

Other common misconceptions. As Rosen and Jerdee (1985) note, misconceptions about the economic condition of older adults, their involvement in society and their attitudes about work and retirement may also affect how older employees are treated and utilized in the workplace.

1. A 1982 Harris Poll found that in all areas of economic life surveyed, older adults were in better condition than was perceived by others in our society. Fowles (1984) reports that the poverty rate for persons over 65 was less than the rate for persons under 65.

2. A 1983 Harris Poll indicates that older adults are more likely to be registered voters and to vote than the general population. Older adults were found to be more involved in charitable work than other age groups and that they belong to as many voluntary organizations as do other age groups. It is clear that older adults are involved with social and political affairs.

3. Older adults are commonly viewed as uninterested in learning or incapable of learning new skills and knowledge. This notion is clearly called into question by the more than 1.7 million adults over age 65 who are enrolled in post-secondary learning institutions.

4. In direct contradiction to the belief that older workers are eagerly anticipating their retirement, a 1979 Harris Poll found that over 50 percent of respondants indicated that they intended to continue working beyond age 65.

Training and Staff Development Needs of Older Adults

It has been noted above that the stereotype of the older adult a rigid, dogmatic, unwilling to learn new knowledge or skills, is false. Cohen, et al. (1981) report the results of a program involving the training of older adults to work in child care settings. All but three of these students were retired, and included former secretaries, furniture salesman, truck driver, nurse, housewives, and a janitor. All expressed interest in working with children though a few had not had regular contact with children in previous years. After receiving training, 75% took positions working with children on a regular basis as employees, volunteers and Foster Grandparents. Follow-up research on these older caregivers found no significant differences between older adults and other staff in the characteristics of their responses to children. Moreover, both groups displayed similar caregiving behaviors and children initiated activities with them in qualitatively similar manners.

While a great deal more needs to be known about the training of older adults, preliminary evidence suggests that training approaches that permit self-paced learning and focus on experiential learning rather than abstract learning may be most compatible with the cognitive strengths of older persons. One examples of such an approach is a recent project training Hispanic older adults in child care work (Landerholm & Nelson, 1985).

Issues and Next Steps

Intergenerational programs and experiences, like other trends in early childhood education, are not issue free. As described in this paper, there are a variety of intergenerational program configurations currently in use. Some are advocated by early childhood educators, others by gerontologists. It is important to recognize, however, that like other new trends, remarkably little is known about what is actually taking place in intergenerational programs and experiences. Objective and detailed program descriptions of intergenerational programs are rare. Rarer still are evaluations of the effects of intergenerational programs. As cited earlier in this paper, there is no lack of claims of positive effects of intergenerational programs on young children and older adults. There is, however, little evidence to substantiate such claims.

To strengthen what is known about intergenerational programs and activities several steps must be taken. Program goals must be stated with greater precision and claims of program effects

must be limited. The scope of program goals must be narrowed. Given a few, clearly stated and realistic program goals, efforts to objectively monitor and measure program effects must also be put in place. Not only should program planners take steps to objectively measure intended outcomes of intergenerational experiences, but they should also recognize the very real potential for unintended effects. Recall, for example, that negative age stereotypes may actually be reinforced through well-intentioned but poorly planned and executed intergenerational exchange programs. In sum, relatively little is known about the details of intergenerational programs, and even less is known about the effects of such programs on young children or older adults.

A second issue concerns the matter of differential assignment of employees in the prekindergarten setting. In current practice, prekindergarten teacher personnel are normally employed for the full length of the operating day of the program: half-day for many nursery/preschools and full day for most child care programs. It is generally assumed that within each program, most teacher personnel will have approximately the same work responsibilities. If prekindergarten programs are to meet the employment needs of many older adults, it may be necessary to employ workers on a variety of work schedules, and to make an effort to match the demands of specific jobs to the abilities of the employee.

A review of the biological and psychological changes associated with aging cited earlier indicates that it may be

necessary to focus on a notion of functional rather than chronological oage. In such an approach, the levels of physical functioning which an employee must have to perform a given job are matched to that employees level of physical functioning. Such an approach recognizes that there are certain capacities and limitations associated with various medical impairments, and allows utilization of an employee in such a way that will be advantageous to both the program and the employee. For example, analysis of various jobs in a child care program may reveal that workers in the 16-24 month toddler room must have the capacity for frequent lifting of 25 to 30 pound weights, as is required for necessary diaper changes. Such a requirement is not necessary for teachers in the five year old room. Knowledge of this job requirement allows an administrator to assign workers based on their physical abilities. While a 70 year old may not be able to meet the job requirements in the toddler room, she may be perfectly able to carry out the work demands in the five year old room. The issue here is not one of preferential treatment of older employees, but rather one of utilizing older employees in ways that are beneficial to the program and to the older employee as well.

Since it appears that most older adults wish to continue to work in some capacity and to be contributing members society, early childhood program administrators should consider alternatives to mandatory retirement, including options for part-time work and flexible working hours. Given the economic

realities of an aging work force, and an increased demand for child care services and child care providers, early childhood educators and program administrators must collaborate on effective retraining program suited to the specific needs of older adults. Effective utilization of older adults will require attention to the demands of prekindergarten and child care work in order to assure that older adults are placed in work settings that are rewarding to them as well as of value to the program. Many older adults have considerable potential for productive participation in prekindergarten and child care programs, and their participation is needed.

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